RAJYA SABHA

Thursday, the 2nd May, 1989/19th Vaisakha, 1911 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock, **Mr. Chairman** in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Inclusion of Calcium and Iron compounds under price control

*101. CHOWDHARY RAM SEWAK:†

DR. (SHRIMATI) SAROJINI MAHISHI:

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry had recommended the inclusion of Calcium and Iron compounds, under price control;

(b) whether these drugs are needed for the National Health Programme;

(c) if so, whether it is a fact that these drugs have not been included under the First Schedule of price control;

(d) whether it is also a fact that the Kelkar Committee could not justify the non-inclusion of these drugs in its supplementary report and that the prices of the medicines based on these drugs have gone up by 100 per cent to 200 per cent; and

(e) if so, what corrective steps have been taken by his Ministry in the interest of the consumer and for the implementation of the Drug Policy announced in December, 1986?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (KUMARI SAROJ KHAPARDE): (a) and (b) This Ministry had not recommended Calcium for price control since it is not used in any National Health Programme. Iron and Folic Acid tablets were initially recommended for price control since these are used in the Maternal and Child Health Programme. Later, a shorter list was sent to the Ministry of Industry in which Iron and Folic Acid tablets was not included. However, Folic Acid is included in the Second Schedule. As such, formulations including Folic Acid came under price control.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) The Kelkar Committee had opined that ferrous salts (iron) were excluded from price control as these are plentifully available at competitive prices The scrutiny made by this Committee had also revealed that majority of the formulations of Calcium and Iron that are used by pregnant women were in combination with the Scheduled drugs and consequently would come under price control. The Ministry of Industry have stated that there has been reduction in price of formulations containing Calcium and Iron due to Government intervention.

(e) There is provision under Drugs price Control Order, 1987 that Government would intervene in the interest of consumers whenever there is undue increase in price even for decontrolled category of drugs.

CHOWDHARY RAM SEWAK: The Government announced Drug Policy in December, 1986 and under the pricing, it was spelt out that category-I of Drugs Prices Control Order would consist of drugs required for National Health Programmes. This was confirmed by the former Minister for Health and Family Welfare in reply to Unstarred Question No. 1717 on 6th May, 1987 in Rajya Sabha and further confirmed and clarified by the former Minister of state in the Ministry of Chemicals and Petrochemicals Shri R. K. Jaichandra Singh in Rajya Sabha on 13th April, 1987 in reply to Unstarred Question No. 37. It has been clearly stated that All drugs needed for National Health Programmes would be covered under Category-I of Drugs Price Control Order. The

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Chowdhary Ram Sewak.

Minister of State in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare informed the House on 6th May, 1987 in reply to Unstarred Question No. 1894 that Maternal and Child Health Programme is one of the National Health Programmes. The Minister of State for Health also informed that Ferrous Salts (Iron) Folic Acid, Calcium Salts, Vitamin A and Oral Rehydration salt are required for Maternal and Child Health Programme, I would like to know from the Hon'ble Minister why neither the Maternal and Child Health Programme nor the drugs required for the programme have been covered in the Drugs Price Control Order when the Policy announced which has the approval of the Cabinet clearly spelt out that the drugs required for National Health Programmes would be covered under category-I of Drugs Price Control Order.

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES AND THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA): Sir, I have stated in the answer that the Kelkar Committee had opined that ferrous salts (iron) were excluded from price control as these are plentifully available at competitive prices. The scrutiny made by this Committee had also revealed that majority of the formulations of Calcium and Iron that are used by pregnant women are in combination with the scheduled drugs and consequently would come under price control. In any case, they are under control. It is not correct to say that in the Maternity and Child Health Programme this drug is not controlled. It is very clear, and the Kelkar Committee was of that view, that the majority of iron and folic acid preparations are in combination with scheduled drugs and anything which is in combination with scheduled drugs automatically gets price control or gets into one or two category.

CHOWDHARY RAM SEWAK: According to reply on 28th March, 1989 to Unstarred Question No. 2080 in Rajya Sabha, his Ministry appointed an expert committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. H. H. Siddiqui to review and consider representations for inclusion of drugs under Category-I of Drugs Price Control Order. I understand that all these drugs i.e. Iron salts, Vitamin A Oral Rehydration salt and Calcium salts have been recommended by the committee for inclusion under category-I. I would like to know from the Hon'ble Minister that what are the reasons and why the report is lying in cold storage since last six months and why no action has so far been taken. Whether it is pressure of drug companies. If these drugs have been recommended for inclusion under Category-I based on National Health Programmes. What are the reasons why poor people are being deprived of fair and reasonable prices.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: Sir, firstly, there was the Kelkar Committee which came with certain recommendations.

AN HON. MEMBER: The Kelkar Committee was for category II, not for category-I. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: Would you listen to me? First listen to me, please: I have not finished. I have just started.

The Kelkar Committee made certain recommendations. There were again representations. They were again referred to the Kelkar Committee. It considered the representations and came out with certain formulations. Then again some representations were received. Observations were made in the House, with the result that another committee was formed, the Siddiqui Committee. Its recommendations have come, and they will be considered in due course.

DR. (SHRIMATI) SAROJINI MAHISHI: The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare announced that there were 14 programmes in the health programme. Later on they said that they were 11. But about the

medicines that were recommended by the Department of Chemicals they have mentioned only 6 programmes. Actually no one knows, even though it was announced by the Government. On the 6th of May it was announced on the floor of this House that these are all national programmes. But in spite of this, Sir, action is not being undertaken. Sometimes I feel that Newton's law holds good for the Government. The Government would continue to lie in a state of inertia unless some external pressure is applied to it, and the direction and velocity with which it moves depends upon the external pressure applied to it. Sir, I do not know. They have announced these things and also recommended earlier 60 drugs for being included under price control. Later on this number was reduced to 26. Now the number is reduced to 18. These are considered as essential drugs for Maternal and Child Health Programme. Ferrous salts, calcium salts, the folic acid, Vitamin A and oral rehydration drugs are all considered, as the Government has admitted, essential also. Category-I is entirely the jurisdiction of the Ministry; it does not concern the Department of Chemicals. Under these circumstances, even after the Siddiqui Committee gave its report six months back, why are not these being implemented? Prices are going up. Once the price is decontrolled, the prices will go out of order. I am not asking as an Opposition Member but I am asking in the larger interests of the consumers. The implementation of the National Health Programme, whether it is 11 point programme or it is 14 point programme, has later on been undertaken by the Department of Chemicals. The Department of Family Welfare is the sole judge to decide what drugs should be under Category-I. Therefore, I would like to know why the implementation has not been done.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: I would like to say that as stated in the Question, the prices have not gone up by 100 per cent or 200 per cent. As a matter of fact, the prices have come down considerably. It means that there are plenty of drugs available and the policy of the Government in this respect has proved successful. Prices have not gone up. There is plenty of capacity and the drugs are available freely. As regards Category I, I would say that the price control of which category goes into Category I or Category II is the responsibility of the Ministry of Industry, Department of Chemicals and Drugs. So, it is not correct to say that we are solely responsible for this. That Ministry has a lot of other considerations, apart from the medical considerations, for putting drugs under one category or another. Whenever our advice is asked for, we give it to them. Our national programmes are included in Category-I. Mention was made about this oral rehydration salts. I was just inquiring and I was told that they were removed because it is a formulation and it is not a bulk drug. Only bulk drugs go in Category I or Category II. So, we are constantly in touch with the concerned Ministry because the basic responsibility for putting them in Category I or Category II is that of the Ministry of Industry.

DR. (SHRIMATI) SAROJINI MAHISHI: I would like to know which is the main ingredient and which are the other elements which go in combination with the main ingredient or with the main factor which decide the price. I would also like to know whether it should be under price control. Ferrous salts are the main ingredients.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: As I have said, since these things are included in Category II any formulation of any drug in Category I or Category II attracts price control. It is not correct to say that it is not controlled.

SHRI VISHWA BANDHU GUPTA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, this matter comes up again and again. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether a specific programme in this direction has been thought out so that this kind of problem does not come. I would like to know whether there is a policy or there is a planning or there is a guideline given so that people do not have a question mark in their minds. I would like to have the hon. Minister react to this.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: Sir, as I have said, the problem is that we have been appointing committees to review one committee's recommendations and then send them back for further review. We now propose to have one high-power committee whose recommendations in this respect will be final. It is not proper that we should be constantly reviewing the lists which have been prepared in the light of discussions and expert advice. We are trying to formulate a policy so that the appointment of one committee after another is avoided. There should be one high-power committee which will settle this matter once and for all to the satisfaction of everybody.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Sir, Although these are specific questions on price line of a number of specific drugs, these specific questions bring us to the general problem also. The general problem has been that despite the Government formulating a drug policy and appointing a number of committees, the plane situation is that there has been a spurt in the prices of a number of drugs which — Whether they are in the list of essential drugs or not, I do not know — the people require in large quantities for the treatment of normal ailments. It makes the treatment quite costly and out of bounds of the common people. Therefore, my specific question is whether the Govermnt is aware of serious disturbances in the price line of a number of drugs. If so, what steps the Government would like to take to make these drugs available at a normal price to the people?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: The policy has been that the drugs mentioned in Category I and Category II which are not regarded as essential for promotions of national programmes are not controlled. The rest of the drugs or formulations, whatever they are not controlled. Therefore, the question of controlling their prices does not arise. As I have said contrary to the impression in the House and in the minds of the hon. Members who have put this question, the prices of these drugs have not gone up. Instead they have come down. Therefore, it means that our drug policy is working successfully.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: This is in the sphere of non-controlled drugs. My question is in respect of controlled drugs. What is the situation there?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You cannot bring in the whole gamut.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: The hon. Minister is taking protection under that. What is the price line of the controlled drugs?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You cannot take up the price line of all the drugs. This question is limited to two drugs. Shri Santosh Bagrodia. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: This has become absolutely costly. Sir, the Minister does not know because he is protected by the Health services he is having. I do not know whether he goes to a common chemist's shop.

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Sir, I want to know one thing from the hon. Minister. Does the Government make a periodic study of price trends in such drugs and their constituent compounds which are not covered by the price control regulations and also, Sir, what proportion of such drugs is manufactured exclusively or largely

by the multi-national drug companies?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: Sir, as I said earlier, the proper Department is the Department of Chemicals and Petro-chemicals which deals with the drugs. They issue the control orders and theirs is the drug policy. Therefore, this question should be addressed to them.

DR. G. VIJAYA MOHAN REDDY: Sir, drugs are there to cure diseases, and Health by 2,000 A.D. is our aim...

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: For all.

DR. G. VIJAYA MOHAN REDDY: Health for all by 2000 AD is our aim. If we do not have drugs under the Ministry of Health, it completely jeopardizes the entire health programme of the country. Will the Ministry, will the Government of India have a rethinking and see that the drugs will be solely kept under the control of the Health Ministry because, Sir, without that, we cannot go forward and have a kind of an ambition to have health for all by 2,000 A.D. which is the aim of the Government itself.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: Sir, as I said, the general observation one can make is that the drug policy has succeeded because, contrary to impression in the House...

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member says that the control should lie with you.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: I would not mind.

SHRI JAGESH DESAI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, medicines are taken for curing diseases, as such, drugs are not a luxury. But in drugs which are not controlled, there is profiteering and I have given the figures in the House that in some cases the price had gone up by 200 per cent. Therefore, will the Government look into it and find out the cost of the formulation and if there is profiteering, will the Government take action to see that the prices are reduced so that the common man can get the medicines at a cheaper price and those who are profiteering are taken to task?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: Sir, as I said, Category I and II drugs have a certain mark-up, which means their prices are controlled. As regards the others, there is no control. But still, the Department of Chemicals and the Petro-chemicals have the authority under law even to intervene in cases of drugs which are outside Category I and II if their prices rise abnormally. And I am sure they are seized of the matter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 102. (*Interruptions*) The question was about two specific drugs. You cannot take everything in the whole purview, I just permitted. (*Interruptions*)

श्री रजनी रंजन साहू : मैं एक बात कहना चाहूंगा कि कीमतें सौ परसेंट से ज्यादा बढ़ी हैं । जिन आइटम्स का इसमें नाम है उसी के दाम डबल हो गये हैं । (व्यवधान)

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: There should be half-an-hour discussion on the question of drug policy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You write to me. But do read the question. The question is specifically about two things.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: That is true.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If that is true, then the rules are there. I cannot go out of the rules. Many things are important. But I cannot do them like that. Question No. 102.

*102. [*The questioner (Shri Talari Manohar) was absent. For answer* vide *cols.* infra]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 103.